

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1495

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to assess the feasibility and advisability of using service dogs for the treatment or rehabilitation of veterans with physical or mental injuries or disabilities, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JULY 22, 2009

Mr. FRANKEN (for himself, Mr. ISAKSON, Ms. LANDRIEU, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. BEGICH, and Mr. BROWN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to assess the feasibility and advisability of using service dogs for the treatment or rehabilitation of veterans with physical or mental injuries or disabilities, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Service Dogs for Vet-
5 erans Act of 2009”.

1 **SEC. 2. PILOT PROGRAM ON USE OF SERVICE DOGS FOR**
2 **THE TREATMENT OR REHABILITATION OF**
3 **VETERANS WITH PHYSICAL OR MENTAL INJU-**
4 **RIES OR DISABILITIES.**

5 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following find-
6 ings:

7 (1) The United States owes a profound debt to
8 those who have served the United States honorably
9 in the Armed Forces.

10 (2) Disabled veterans suffer from a range of
11 physical and mental injuries and disabilities.

12 (3) In 2008, the Army reported the highest
13 level of suicides among its soldiers since it began
14 tracking the rate 28 years before 2009.

15 (4) A scientific study documented in the 2008
16 Rand Report entitled “Invisible Wounds of War” es-
17 timated that 300,000 veterans of Operation Endur-
18 ing Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom currently
19 suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder.

20 (5) Veterans have benefitted in multiple ways
21 from the provision of service dogs.

22 (6) The Department of Veterans Affairs has
23 been successfully placing guide dogs with the blind
24 since 1961.

25 (7) Thousands of dogs around the country
26 await adoption.

1 (b) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—Not later than 120 days
2 after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary
3 of Veterans Affairs shall commence a three-year pilot pro-
4 gram to assess the benefits, feasibility, and advisability of
5 using service dogs for the treatment or rehabilitation of
6 veterans with physical or mental injuries or disabilities,
7 including post-traumatic stress disorder.

8 (c) PARTNERSHIPS.—

9 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall carry
10 out the pilot program by partnering with nonprofit
11 organizations that—

12 (A) have experience providing service dogs
13 to individuals with injuries or disabilities;

14 (B) do not charge fees for the dogs, serv-
15 ices, or lodging that they provide; and

16 (C) are accredited by a generally accepted
17 industry-standard accrediting institution.

18 (2) REIMBURSEMENT OF COSTS.—The Sec-
19 retary shall reimburse partners for costs relating to
20 the pilot program as follows:

21 (A) For the first 50 dogs provided under
22 the pilot program, all costs relating to the pro-
23 vision of such dogs.

1 (B) For dogs provided under the pilot pro-
2 gram after the first 50 dogs provided, all costs
3 relating to the provision of every other dog.

4 (d) PARTICIPATION.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—As part of the pilot pro-
6 gram, the Secretary shall provide a service dog to a
7 number of veterans with physical or mental injuries
8 or disabilities that is greater than or equal to the
9 greater of—

10 (A) 200; and

11 (B) the minimum number of such veterans
12 required to produce scientifically valid results
13 with respect to assessing the benefits and costs
14 of the use of such dogs for the treatment or re-
15 habilitation of such veterans.

16 (2) COMPOSITION.—The Secretary shall ensure
17 that—

18 (A) half of the participants in the pilot
19 program are veterans who suffer primarily from
20 a mental health injury or disability; and

21 (B) half of the participants in the pilot
22 program are veterans who suffer primarily from
23 a physical injury or disability.

24 (e) STUDY.—In carrying out the pilot program, the
25 Secretary shall conduct a scientifically valid research

1 study of the costs and benefits associated with the use of
2 service dogs for the treatment or rehabilitation of veterans
3 with physical or mental injuries or disabilities. The mat-
4 ters studied shall include the following:

5 (1) The therapeutic benefits to such veterans,
6 including the quality of life benefits reported by the
7 veterans partaking in the pilot program.

8 (2) The economic benefits of using service dogs
9 for the treatment or rehabilitation of such veterans,
10 including—

11 (A) savings on health care costs, including
12 savings relating to reductions in hospitalization
13 and reductions in the use of prescription drugs;
14 and

15 (B) productivity and employment gains for
16 the veterans.

17 (3) The effectiveness of using service dogs to
18 prevent suicide.

19 (f) REPORTS.—

20 (1) ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SECRETARY.—
21 After each year of the pilot program, the Secretary
22 shall submit to Congress a report on the findings of
23 the Secretary with respect to the pilot program.

24 (2) FINAL REPORT BY THE NATIONAL ACADEMY
25 OF SCIENCES.—Not later than 180 days after the

- 1 date of the completion of the pilot program, the Na-
- 2 tional Academy of Sciences shall submit to Congress
- 3 a report on the results of the pilot program.

